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*Recd. Mar. 9, '99*

# THE BOUNDARY LINE

— BETWEEN —

## Massachusetts and New Hampshire

FROM THE MERRIMACK RIVER TO THE CONNECTICUT.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE OLD RESIDENTS' HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
OF LOWELL, ON DECEMBER 21, 1893, THE TWENTY-FIFTH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMATION OF THE SOCIETY.

By HON. SAMUEL ABBOTT GREEN.

LOWELL, MASS.:  
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1894

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*The Boundary Line between Massachusetts and New  
Hampshire from the Merrimack River to the  
Connecticut.*

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WHEN I first received the message asking me to read a paper on this interesting anniversary, my first impulse was to decline the invitation with thanks; but after some reflection I thought of my early associations with your beautiful city and with Middlesex County, and then I concluded to accept it. In this instance, perhaps, the sober second thought was not the wisest or the best, as it is commonly supposed to be. More than fifty years ago I was very familiar with Lowell,—not the large city of to-day with its 85,000 inhabitants spread out on both sides of the Merrimack, but a small city of 20,000 or 25,000 people living on the southerly side of the river. Not then the handsome city, as now seen, with its stately public buildings, its fine churches, and elegant dwellings, and with many other signs of thrift and cultivation. It had not then become known as the home of men distinguished at the bar and on the bench, and in the arts and sciences, as it is known to-day throughout the land. Twice within a dozen years the voters of this Commonwealth have chosen for the highest office in their gift two of your eminent citizens; and twice within a longer period of time two others

Recd. 11-11-35



for the second highest office. Fifty years ago no part of Dracut had been annexed to Lowell; and Middlesex Village was still owing political allegiance to Chelmsford. With kinsfolk living here my social relations to your city were as close as they were always pleasant; and my recollection of that period is still fresh and vivid. In the neighboring town of Groton I went to school with Lowell boys,—and girls, too, for that matter,—and I played with them there as well as here; though now most of them have been gathered to their fathers. At this moment my thoughts go back to that time, and I can see them in my mind's eye as clearly as I ever could when they were in the body. What a gracious attribute is memory, and what a gift to mankind! How it lightens the cares and burdens of life, and smooths the rough places along the travelled way!

I have mentioned these trivial facts of a personal nature in order to show that once I knew your city well enough to entitle me now to be called almost a Lowell boy by adoption, or, as they say in the army, by brevet; and, if it were possible for a man to have two native places, I should certainly claim this city as one of them. These introductory remarks may not be in their character sufficiently historical to meet the needs of this occasion, but they give the recollections of an Old Resident surely, and so they are in keeping with a part of the name of your association.

In my paper to-night I purpose to call your attention to a controversy that, more than a century and a half ago, was waged in the Merrimack Valley for many a year, and formed then one of the burning questions of the day. For a long time the dispute kept a large number of towns in wavering uncertainty whether they belonged to the Province of Massachusetts or to that of New Hampshire;

and when by royal decree the matter was brought to a final issue, the course of the Merrimack River, as it flows now through your city limits, was an essential element in the settlement of the case. I take, therefore, as my subject this evening: The Pawtucket Falls as a Factor in determining so much of the Northern Boundary of Massachusetts as lies between the Merrimack and Connecticut Rivers; with an account of the conflicting claims of Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

To the casual observer the existence of these falls in the bed of the Merrimack River seems to be an accidental occurrence and a matter of pure chance; but this view of the subject is as fallacious as it is superficial. In this world of ours there is no effect without a cause, and everything that now is, or has ever been, is related to an antecedent. It was this fact which the poet had in mind when he wrote: "Whatever is, is right;" he did not mean morally right, but logically right. Every change in matter implies a cause, and these changes run on, connecting the present with the past, and the future with the present, through an endless period of duration. All events are governed by law, though the limitations of the human intellect prevent the discovery of the great underlying principle.

Do not misunderstand me in this statement, or suppose for an instant that I am an unbeliever in the moral responsibility of mankind. The telling influences on individual life run back indefinitely; and the same never-ending causes reach forward through another immensity of space, and affect all who come within range. During every day of our existence each one of us is influenced, either for good or bad, by those nearest to us and around us. What a responsibility, then, is life! It is the only thing that is real, and all else is flimsy. It has been wittily

said by a writer—so distinguished in many ways that I hardly know whether to speak of him as a poet or a physician, but whom all will recognize as “the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table”—that a man’s education begins a hundred years before he is born. I am almost tempted to add that even then he is only putting on the finishing touches of his training.

Since the earliest dawn of time,—so far back that the mind utterly fails to grasp the idea, or even in its wildest thoughts to approach that period,—since that remote epoch, I repeat, agencies have been at work which show themselves to-day in the tumbling waters of your noble river. The relation of cause to effect, and the inter-relations occurring every instant in their countless combinations, all bind the present with the distant past, and keep up the continuity of the thread from the very beginning to the end. In the early development of this planet Nature was making various combinations of matter that took innumerable cycles to create, which now enter so quietly into our daily life that they excite within us not even a shadow of thought or a ripple of wonder. Her work at that prehistoric period forecast the existence of Pawtucket Falls, and settled the site of your city.

According to science, geology deals with the internal structure of the earth, but it also plays another part in the manifold activities of the world. It throws up chains of lofty mountains which divide empires, and often governs even the mother-tongue that is spoken by the people. It scoops out the channels of deep rivers and confines the waters within their solid embankments. It marks out the places of slow and sluggish currents, as well as those of falls and rapids, and dots the banks with thrifty industries. It was the geological formation



of the bed of the Merrimack that set your spindles a-whirling, and gave the key-note to the music of your machinery.

The Pawtucket Falls lie at the bend in the river where it reaches the most southerly point in its whole course; and owing to this fact the falls were made the basis of settlement in the controversy which I shall describe this evening.

The Colonial Charter of Massachusetts Bay, granted by Charles I., under date of March 1, 1628-9, gave to the Governor and other representatives of the Massachusetts Company, on certain conditions, all the territory lying between an easterly and westerly line running three miles north of any part of the Merrimack River and extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, and a similar parallel line running three miles south of any part of the Charles River.

Without attempting to trace in detail, from the time of the Cabots to the days of the charter, the continuity of the English title to this transcontinental strip of territory, it is enough to know that the precedents and usages of that period gave to Great Britain, in theory at least, undisputed sway over the region, and forged every link in the chain of authority and sovereignty. It has been claimed that the rights and privileges given by the contract conflicted with those already granted by the Crown to Sir Ferdinando Gorges and his son Robert, and to John Mason; but I do not purpose now to enter on the discussion of that question.

At the time of the charter it was incorrectly supposed that America was a narrow strip of land,—perhaps an arm of the continent of Asia,—and that the distance across from ocean to ocean was comparatively short. It was then known that the Isthmus of Darien was nar-

row, and it was therefore presumed that the whole continent also was narrow. New England was a region about which little was known beyond slight examinations made from the coast line. The rivers were unexplored, and all knowledge concerning them was confined to the neighborhood of the places where they emptied into the sea. The early navigators thought that the general course of the Merrimack was easterly and westerly, as it runs in that direction near the mouth; and their error was perpetuated inferentially by the words of the charter. By later explorations this strip of territory has since been lengthened out into a belt three thousand miles long, and stretches across the width of a continent. The cities of Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Detroit, and Milwaukee all lie within this zone, on territory that once belonged to the Massachusetts Company, according to the charter granted by Charles I.

The general course of the Merrimack, as well as its source, however, soon became known to the early settlers on the coast. There had been told fabulous tales of the mineral wealth that lay concealed in various parts of the unexplored country; and there were, besides, adventurous scouts always ready for a new sensation, whether in search of game or treasure. In 1635, only six years after the grant was made by King Charles, a little book or tract, written by William Wood, and entitled "New England's Prospect," was published in London, which contains a map of "The South part of New-England, as it is Planted this yeare, 1635." Rude in its construction, and crude in its geographical details, the map is of great interest as the earliest one which gives the general direction of the Merrimack, as well as its source in a large pond or lake. Without doubt these facts were obtained both from the hardy sons of adventure and from the natives.

The sites of several small Indian settlements are shown along the banks of the river; and among such are "Amaskeig" and "Pennacooke," in the neighborhood of the present cities of Manchester and Concord, where these names are still kept up familiar as household words. "Pentuckett," which comes now within the limits of Lowell, is represented, and an island, known to-day as Wicassee, situated a few miles up the river, and now within the limits of Tyngsborough, is also shown.

The Winthrop Map of the eastern part of Massachusetts, made about the year 1637, of which the original manuscript is in the British Museum, gives the course of the Merrimack below the site of your city, and contains this descriptive note: "Merimack river it runnes 100 miles vp into the Country & falls out of a ponde 10: miles broad."

Near the middle of the last century a map representing a large part of Eastern Massachusetts, including portions of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, was published, presumably in London, which gives the course of the Merrimack below the site of Manchester, and it is there called the "Merimac or Sturgeon R[iver]." "Pautucket Great Falls" are represented between the mouth of Stony Brook and that of Beaver Brook.

In the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society there is a large manuscript map, made for the British Government a short time before the breaking out of the Revolution, on which is shown so much of the Merrimack River as lies below the Litchfield Meeting-house. On this map is marked the site of "Petucket Falls," and also of "Petucket Pond," at the mouth of Beaver Brook. The name Petucket is another form of Pawtucket; and the several forms Pentucket, Pautucket, Petucket, and

Pawtucket are derived from a common root, and philologically are identical. The Indian word Pawtucket means "at the Falls;" and it is found to-day in various parts of the land attached to places lying on rivers. As far back as the year 1679, Indian interpreters asserted that the river near Mr. Blackstone's house in the Narragansett country was called in their language "Pautuck," which signifies "a Fall," because there the fresh water falls into the salt water. The word Pawtuxet is a diminutive, and means "at the little Falls," and this also occurs in different places.

The Indians had no written language, and the early settlers took the geographical names of the country by sound, and wrote them down accordingly, without knowing their meaning. This was phonetic spelling, pure and simple, and explains the diversified orthography of Indian words which is so common. With an unwritten language the Indians themselves had no proper standard of pronunciation; and their own usage, therefore, in regard to the same words often varied at different times. A peculiarity of their language was that the geographical names, as applied by them to hills, mountains, ponds, rivers, etc., were common nouns and had a meaning, but the same words, when used by the English, in the course of time became proper nouns and lost their significance. But all this is a digression from my subject.

Through this misapprehension in regard to the course of the Merrimack River, during the early history of the colony, there have arisen certain disputes over the boundary line between the adjoining states of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, which are not settled even in our time. The royal grant comprised a large tract of land, which was then a dense wilderness, situated outside of Christendom. After the lapse of some years the



settlers took steps to find out the territorial boundaries of the colony on the north in order to establish more exactly the limits of their jurisdictional authority. To this end at an early period a commission was appointed by the General Court, composed of Captain Simon Willard and Captain Edward Johnson, two of the foremost men in the colony at that time.

Captain Willard was a native of Kent, England, and came to Massachusetts in the year 1634. He lived first at Cambridge and Concord, then at Lancaster, from which town, about 1671, he removed to Groton, and in all these places he exerted a wide influence. In his day he filled various civil offices, and was a noted military man, holding a major's commission. His farm at Groton was situated at Nonacoicus, now within the limits of Ayer, a town named after a former resident of your city. Willard's dwelling-house here was the first building burned at the attack on Groton, March 13, 1676, in Philip's War.

During several years previously Major Willard had been engaged with his command in scouting along the line of frontier settlements, and in protecting the inhabitants. At this assault he came with a company of cavalry to the relief of the town, though he did not reach the place in time to be of service in its defence. He died at Charlestown, on April 24, 1676, only a few weeks after Groton was abandoned by the inhabitants.

Captain Johnson, the other commissioner, was also a Kentish soldier, and at the date of his appointment a member of the General Court. He first came to New England with Governor Winthrop during the summer of 1630, though at that time he did not tarry a great while; but a few years later he returned with his family, and remained until the time of his death. In the early colonial records his name always appears with the prefix

of "Mr.," which shows that he was a man of property and social position. He was actively engaged in the settlement of the town of Woburn, where he held both civil and ecclesiastical offices. For more than twenty-five years he represented that town in the House of Deputies, and for one year was the speaker. He was the recorder of the town from the date of its incorporation until his death, which took place on April 23, 1672. At the present time he is known mainly by his *History of New England*, a quaint work entitled "*Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England*," which was published originally in the year 1654. It contains many facts concerning the early settlement of the country not found elsewhere, and forms an important addition to our historical literature.

Such were the two men constituting the commission, who were to interpret the meaning of the charter in reference to the northernmost boundary of the colony, and to say where the line should be drawn. The order of the General Court, appointing these commissioners, was passed on a day subsequent to May 31, 1652, although in the printed edition of the Colonial Records it appears to be of that date. In the early history of Massachusetts the proceedings of the General Court, as a rule, are not dated day by day,—though there are many exceptions,—but the beginning of the session is always given, and occasionally the days of the month are also given. These dates in the printed edition of the Colonial Records are often carried along without authority, at times extending over a period of several days, or even a week or more; and for this reason, in some instances, it is impossible to learn the exact date of particular legislation, unless there are contemporaneous papers bearing on the subject. Under the order the commissioners were empowered to engage

"such Artists & other Assistants" as were needed for the purpose. In early times a surveyor was called an artist, and in old records the word is often found with that meaning. Under the authority thus given, they appointed Sergeant John Sherman of Watertown and Jonathan Ince of Cambridge to join the party and do the scientific work of the expedition.

Sergeant Sherman was a land surveyor, and a prominent inhabitant of Watertown. He was often chosen a selectman, and for many years the town clerk, besides being several times elected to the Legislature. He was the great-grandfather of Roger Sherman, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and the ancestor of three members of the United States Senate, recently sitting in that distinguished body.

Jonathan Ince, the other "artist," was a graduate of Harvard College in the class of 1650, who, after taking the degree of Bachelor of Arts, remained at Cambridge for more than three years. During this period he appears to have been acting in various capacities connected with the institution, and, like an under-graduate, he was regularly charged for the usual small items in the college accounts. In a certain way he was the confidential clerk of President Dunster, and at the date of his appointment by the commission he was filling the butlership of the college, a position which placed him in charge of the commons. These two surveyors, Sherman and Ince, were allowed "a daily stipend of ten shillings in the best pay of the country."

The expedition consisted of eight or ten men, including several Indian guides, or "pilatts," and started, it is supposed, from some place within the present limits of Lowell, above Pawtucket Falls, the whole party proceeding by boat up the Merrimack. When they reached the

confluence of the two rivers in what is now the town of Franklin, New Hampshire, they followed up the eastern branch, as being at that season of the year the larger stream, and soon they came to the outlet of the lake, at The Weirs. Here the commissioners considered the source of the river to be; and in their report made a few weeks later to the General Court they gave it "the name of the head of Merremack."

For many years the place has now been called "The Weirs," so named from the fact that the Indians, from early times, had weirs set in the stream at this point for the catching of fish. It is a spot very favorable for the purpose, as it is the only outlet to the lake, and all the water within this large body flows here through a narrow channel into the river. Near by there is now a small settlement, a favorite place during the summer season for old soldiers' reunions, camp meetings, and conventions, as well as a resort for tourists, which is doubtless familiar to many in this audience. At the present time the village is known as The Weirs, and comes within the city limits of Laconia, New Hampshire.

In October, 1652, the commissioners made a report, or "return," as they called it, to the General Court, giving the result of their labors, and including the affidavits of the two surveyors. According to this report they fixed upon a place then called by the Indians "Aquedahtan," as the head of the Merrimack River. By due observation they found the latitude of this spot to be forty-three degrees, forty minutes, and twelve seconds; and the northern limit of the patent was three miles north of this point. Lying on the bed of the stream here, near the outlet to the lake, and projecting above the surface, is a large granite boulder running north and south, perhaps seven feet long, which is a conspicuous object as seen from the



shore. For a guess, it is a hundred feet from the western bank, and a hundred and twenty-five feet from the eastern bank; and at low water, even before the stone was raised, it was always uncovered and exposed to view. This rock caught the eye of the commissioners, and at once was taken by them as showing the official head of the Merrimack; and, in token of their authority, it was marked on the upper surface with the following letters:

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| EI      | SW   |
| WP      | IOHN |
| ENDICVT |      |
| GOV     |      |

These letters are roughly cut, but with moderate care can easily be made out. From the action of the elements and the discoloration by time, their edges are somewhat worn, but they are still fairly distinct. They are about four inches in height, though they vary somewhat in this respect, and are read from the west side of the rock. The initials in the first line are those of the two commissioners, Edward Johnson and Simon Willard, while the rest of the inscription gives the name of the Governor of Massachusetts at that period. Without doubt the letters "WP" stand for Worshipful, a title of dignity given in early times to persons of high official position. Formerly the boulder, now known as the Endicott Rock, was somewhat lower in the bed of the stream, and its upper surface was exposed for the most part during the summer season only, but about nine years ago it was raised two or three feet and blocked underneath, so that the inscription should not be covered with water. The rock was considered to be of so much public interest that the Senate and House of the State of New Hampshire, on September 7, 1883, and again on August

25, 1885, passed joint resolutions appropriating sums of money for its better preservation and protection. Under this authority the raising was done, and a substantial granite canopy has been built overhead, as well as a foot-bridge connecting the structure with the western bank of the river. The letters on the rock have been gilded, so that they can be more easily read. There are other letters in gilt now on the stone, besides those I have given, which are said to be the initials of John Sherman and Jonathan Ince, the two surveyors of the party; but after the most critical examination on my part, at two different times, both before and since the structure was built, I have not been able to make them out.

The boulder was situated on the property of the Winnepissiogee Lake Cotton and Woollen Manufacturing Company, which uses the lake as a storage basin, and in dry seasons draws upon it for a supply of water; but the ownership in the rock and in a small space around it has now been transferred to the state of New Hampshire. Thirteen years ago, in the autumn of 1880, with due foresight, this company had seven casts in plaster taken of the inscription. One of these was given to the cabinet of the Massachusetts Historical Society, on March 12, 1881; another to the Peabody Museum of American Archæology at Cambridge, which was afterward presented to the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester; a third to the New Hampshire Historical Society; a fourth to the Proprietors of the Locks and Canals on Merrimack River, whose office is in your city of Lowell; a fifth to the Essex Company at Lawrence; a sixth to the Winnepissiogee Lake Cotton and Woollen Manufacturing Company at Lake Village, since known as Lakeport, but now a part of Laconia; and a seventh to the Long Island Historical Society at Brooklyn.



It is somewhat singular that the existence of this inscription and of the rock as a memorial stone should have been lost sight of for more than a century and a half, and entirely forgotten, as is the fact. The letters were cut either in July or August, 1652; and there is no subsequent allusion to them until they were brought to light anew in a letter of Colonel Philip Carrigain to John Farmer, Esq., the noted antiquary. This communication is printed in the "Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society" (IV. 194-200), and gives some interesting details in connection with its discovery. The volume was published in the year 1834; and the letter, which is undated, was written near that time, probably in the autumn of 1833. A dam had been built across the outlet of the lake, in order to clear the channel so that a steamboat—then recently constructed—might pass to a winter harbor at Lake Village, afterward known as Lakeport, five miles below. During the excavation of the channel, the rock and inscription were first noticed by Daniel Tucker and John T. Coffin, president and cashier, respectively, of the Winnepissiogee Bank at Meredith, and by them reported to Colonel Carrigain, who promptly communicated the discovery to Mr. Farmer. At that time The Weirs came within the limits of the town of Meredith, as Laconia had not yet been set off as a separate township. It is an interesting fact to note that Colonel Carrigain, in his letter, first suggested that the stone be called the Endicott Rock, a name by which it has since been known.

In the summer of 1890, during a very delightful drive through parts of Vermont and New Hampshire, in company with the Honorable George Lewis Balcom, of Claremont, who passed his boyhood in Lowell, and received his early education here, I visited this interesting

boulder. It is situated a short distance below the railroad station, and just above the bridge leading from The Weirs to the other side of the river. The stone is the earliest public monument found within the limits of New England which was made by the English settlers. For nearly two centuries and a half the inscription has battled the storms of all seasons, and been exposed to every change of weather and to all the erosive effects of time. The state of New Hampshire showed a due regard for right sentiment when she made an appropriation to preserve and protect such an historical relic.

The northern boundary of the original grant to the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, as has been shown, was based on a misapprehension; and this ignorance of the topography of the country on the part of the English authorities afterward gave rise to considerable controversy between the adjoining provinces of Massachusetts and New Hampshire. So long as the territory in question remained unsettled, the dispute was a matter of little practical importance; but after a time it assumed grave proportions and led to much confusion. Grants made by one province clashed with those made by the other; and there was no ready tribunal to pass on the claims of the two parties. Towns were chartered by Massachusetts in territory claimed by New Hampshire; and this action was the cause of bitter feeling and provoking legislation. Massachusetts contended for the tract of land "nominated in the bond," which would carry the jurisdictional line fifty miles northward, into the very heart of New Hampshire; and, on the other hand, that province strenuously opposed this view of the case, and claimed that the line should run, east and west, three miles north of the mouth of the Merrimack River. In order to settle these conflicting claims, a Royal Commission was appointed to con



sider the subject and establish the contested line. The commissioners were selected from the councillors of the provinces of New York, New Jersey, Nova Scotia, and Rhode Island,—men supposed to be free from any local prejudices in the matter, and impartial in their feelings; and, without doubt, they were such. The board, as appointed under the Great Seal, consisted of nineteen members, although only seven served in their capacity as commissioners. They met at Hampton, New Hampshire, on August 1, 1737; and for mutual convenience the Legislative Assemblies of the two provinces met in the same neighborhood,—the Assembly of New Hampshire at Hampton Falls, and that of Massachusetts at Salisbury, places only five miles apart. This was done in order that the claims of each side might be considered with greater dispatch than they would otherwise receive. The General Court of Massachusetts met at Salisbury, in the First Parish Meeting-house, on August 10, 1737, and continued to hold its sessions in that town until October 20, inclusive, though with several adjournments, of which one was for thirty-five days. The printed journal of the House of Representatives, during this period, gives the proceedings of that body, which contain much in regard to the controversy besides the ordinary business of legislation. Many years previously the two provinces had been united, so far as to have the same governor,—at this time Jonathan Belcher,—but each province had its own legislative body and code of laws. Governor Belcher was a native of Cambridge; and in the discussion of these matters his prejudices and sympathies appear to have been with Massachusetts. To a disinterested person, one hundred and fifty years afterward, this fact crops out more plainly than it seemed at that time.

The commissioners heard both sides of the question,

and agreed upon an award in alternative, leaving to the King the interpretation of the charters given respectively by Charles I., and William and Mary. Under one interpretation the decision was in favor of Massachusetts, and under the other in favor of New Hampshire; and at the same time each party was allowed six weeks to file objections. Neither side, however, was satisfied with this indirect decision; and the whole matter was then taken to the King in Council. Massachusetts claimed that the Merrimack River began at the confluence of the Winnepisaukee and the Pemigewasset Rivers, and that the northern boundary of the province should run, east and west, three miles north of this point. It is true that this line was somewhat to the southward of the one proposed by the Colonial Commissioners in the summer of 1652; but at the time of the dispute the relative size of the two rivers was better understood. On the other hand, New Hampshire claimed that the intention of the charter was to establish a northern boundary on a line, running east and west, three miles north of the mouth of the Merrimack River. In this controversy Massachusetts seems to have based her claim on the letter of the contract, while New Hampshire based hers on the spirit of the contract.

The strongest argument in favor of Massachusetts is the fact that she had always considered the disputed territory as belonging to her jurisdiction; and before this period she had chartered twenty-four towns lying within the limits of the tract. These several settlements all looked to her for protection, and naturally sympathized with her during the controversy.

As just stated, neither was satisfied with the verdict of the Royal Commissioners, and both sides appealed from their judgment. The matter was then taken to England for a decision, which was given by the King, on March 4,

1739-40. His judgment was final, and in favor of New Hampshire. It gave that province not only all the territory in dispute, but a strip of land fourteen miles in width lying along her southern border,—mostly west of the Merrimack,—which she had never claimed. This strip was the tract of land between the line running east and west three miles north of the southernmost trend of the river, and a similar line three miles north of its mouth. By the decision many townships were taken from Massachusetts and given to New Hampshire. It is said that the King reprimanded Governor Belcher for the partisan way in which he presented his side of the case, and this fact may have biased His Majesty. The settlement of the disputed question was undoubtedly a public benefit, but it caused at the time a great deal of hard feeling.

In establishing the new boundary west of the Merrimack, Pawtucket Falls, with which you all are so familiar, was taken as the starting-place; and the line which now separates the two states, between the Merrimack and Connecticut Rivers, was run west three miles north of this point. It was surveyed officially in the spring of 1741, with reference to the settlement of the dispute according to the King's decree. Concerning the boundary east of the Merrimack there was but little controversy, as the river was a good guide in the matter, although there were a few minor points under discussion. After the King's decision was rendered, the question of expense came up in regard to the surveys and the markings of the line. It seems to have been generally understood that the entire cost of these preliminary steps should be borne by the Province of Massachusetts, but Governor Belcher did not so regard it; and this misunderstanding caused further delay in the settlement of the dispute. George Mitchell was appointed to make the survey from the Atlantic coast

to a point three miles north of Pawtucket, afterward known as the Boundary Pine, though now the tree which gave the name has disappeared; and Richard Hazen from the Boundary Pine to the Hudson River. Mitchell worked from a fixed line, as he had to establish a boundary three miles from the Merrimack; but Hazen was to run a straight line through the wilderness with the help of only a compass,—a much harder task than Mitchell's.

Surveys dependent on the compass are always subject to many sources of inaccuracy, such as the loss of magnetic virtue in the poles of the needle; blunting of the centre-pin; unsuspected local attractions; oversight or mistake as to the secular variation; and variability from the influence of the sun, known as the diurnal variation. Error from this last source may amount, in the distance of a mile, to twenty feet or more of lateral deviation. Notwithstanding these difficulties and drawbacks, the accuracy of Hazen's survey has been confirmed to a remarkable degree; and the controversy over the boundary line in later times has been wholly in regard to the variation of the needle which Hazen allowed in making the survey. His journal, fortunately, has been preserved, and is printed in "The New England Historical and Genealogical Register" (XXXII. 323-333) for July, 1879. It shows the hardships he encountered and the obstructions he met during the progress of the survey, which was begun on March 21, 1741, and ended at the Hudson River, on April 16. In less than four weeks he established a straight line one hundred and nine miles long through an unbroken wilderness, when the ground for a large part of the way was covered with snow. At one place, he writes: "The Snow in Generall was near three feet Deep, & where we lodged near five;" and in many other places the snow was two or three feet deep.



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According to the journal, the surveyors began to measure the line, running three miles due north from the Merrimack, at a place called "The Great Bunt," near the Pawtucket Falls. This spot lay on the west side of the mouth of Beaver Brook, and was once a noted fishing-ground. Formerly, before the dam was built, the falls covered a longer stretch of the river than they do at the present time; and a hundred and fifty years ago the entire course of the rapids was probably included under the name of Pawtucket Falls. The designation of "The Great Bunt" has now disappeared from the local nomenclature of this neighborhood, though some of its cognate forms were kept up for a long time. When the same line was re-surveyed in the summer of 1825, it began at a point then called the "great pot-hole place," which was presumably the same spot under another name. "Bunt" is a nautical word applied to the middle part or belly of a sail, as well as to the sag of a net, and perhaps allied to "bent;" and it requires no great stretch of the imagination to see why a cavity or hole in the river was called a "bunt."

The boundary line between the two provinces, as established by Hazen, ran straight through the wilderness, over hill and dale, across fields and pastures in a sparsely settled country, frequently cutting off large slices of towns, as well as of farms, and sometimes bisecting them, and suddenly transferring the allegiance of the people from one political power to another. To the plain and sturdy yeomanry it seemed a kind of revolution, which they could not understand. In many instances they were taxed for their lands in adjoining towns, where previously the tax had been paid wholly in one town; and much confusion was created. Even to-day many of the border farms overlap the boundary, and lie in both states, and

often the owners cannot say exactly where the line should run. A farmer living near the boundary once told me that he had paid taxes on the same parcel of land in two different towns,—one in Massachusetts and the other in New Hampshire. Another man living in close proximity to the line has told me during the present year that he could not say within several rods where the boundary came.

By the new provincial line, as established by royal decree, the following Massachusetts towns, lying in their geographical order between the Merrimack River and the Connecticut, lost portions of their territory:—

First, Dunstable, a large township originally containing 128,000 acres of land, and situated on both sides of the river, was so cut in two that by far the larger part came within the limits of New Hampshire. Even the meeting-house and the burying-ground were separated from that portion still remaining in Massachusetts; and this fact added not a little to the animosity felt by the inhabitants when the disputed question was settled. It is no exaggeration to say that throughout the old township the feelings and sympathies were wholly with Massachusetts. A short time before this period the town of Nottingham had been incorporated by the General Court, and its territory was taken from Dunstable. It comprised all the land of that town lying on the east side of the Merrimack River; and the difficulty of attending public worship across the river, in a great measure, led to the division. When the new line was established it affected Nottingham, like many other towns, most unfavorably. It divided its territory, and left a tract of land in Massachusetts too small for a separate township, but by its associations and traditions belonging to Dunstable. This tract to-day is that part of Tyngsborough lying east of the

river. The larger portion of the town, by the new line, came under the jurisdiction of New Hampshire; but as there was another town of Nottingham in the eastern quarter of that province, the name was subsequently changed by an Act of the Legislature, on July 5, 1746, to Nottingham West; and still later, on July 1, 1830, this was again changed to Hudson. Counting the city of Nashua, there are now in the state of New Hampshire no less than seven towns made up wholly or in part of the territory which was taken from Dunstable by the running of the line.

Secondly, Groton, though suffering much less severely than the adjoining town of Dunstable, lost more land than she cared to spare, lying now mostly in Nashua, though a small portion of it—not much larger than a good-sized potato patch—comes within the limits of Hollis, near the railroad station.

Thirdly, Townsend was deprived of more than one-quarter of her territory; and the present towns of Brookline, Mason, and New Ipswich in New Hampshire are reaping the benefit of it.

Fourthly, two of the Canada townships, so called,—now known as Ashburnham and “Warwick and Royalston,” the last not at that time incorporated as two separate towns,—shared the same fate as the other towns lying along the line. Ashburnham lost a thousand acres; and Warwick and Royalston, then called “Canada to Roxbury,” or “Roxbury Canada,” a considerably larger slice of land.

Fifthly and lastly, Northfield was deprived of a strip of territory more than four miles and a half in width, running the whole length of its northern frontier. This portion of the town is now included within the limits of Hinsdale and Winchester, New Hampshire, and of Vernon, Vermont.



Besides these losses a tract of unappropriated land, usually denominated Province land, was transferred to New Hampshire.

On the easterly side of the Merrimack, between the river and the ocean, there had always been much less uncertainty in regard to the divisional line,—as, in a general way, it followed the bend of the river,—and therefore much less controversy over the jurisdiction.

Many of you, doubtless, have often noticed on a map the tier of towns which fringe the north bank of the Merrimack, between this city and the mouth of the river; and you may have wondered why those places, which from a geographical point of view belong to the state of New Hampshire, should come now within the limits of Massachusetts. The explanation of the seeming incongruity goes back to the date of the first charter, more than two hundred and sixty years ago, as has been related this evening.

At the period when the new line was established, it was generally thought that the question was permanently settled, but such did not prove to be the fact. Early in the present century, owing to the uncertainty of the line at that time, public attention was again called to the subject. It was claimed by the state of New Hampshire that, in establishing the boundary, Hazen had allowed too many degrees for the variation of the needle, and consequently the line had been carried too far north; or, in other words, that there was a gore of land lying along the northern boundary of Massachusetts, and coming within the limits of that state, which rightfully belonged to New Hampshire. This triangular strip began near the city of Nashua and gradually widened toward the western end, until it reached the Connecticut River, where it was three or four miles in width. In other words, a narrow slip of land in

the shape of a wedge, with its thin edge at a point three miles north of Pawtucket Falls, and its butt end on the Connecticut, extending three or four miles along that river, south of the present state line which forms the northern side of the triangle, would comprise the territory now claimed by New Hampshire. It was further said that Governor Belcher was responsible for the allowance in the variation of the needle, and that he had given instructions to Hazen to allow this variation in order to circumvent the decree of the King, and to defraud New Hampshire. Fortunately, to refute this charge, the warrant given to Hazen by the Governor is still extant, and shows that no such directions were given; and furthermore, if such directions had been given, it would have added as much territory on the eastern boundary of New Hampshire as was lost by that state on the southern boundary.

In order to settle the dispute at this period between the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and those of the state of New Hampshire, the Governor of Massachusetts was authorized by a resolve of the General Court, on February 24, 1825, to appoint three Commissioners, who were empowered to meet a similar Commission appointed on the part of New Hampshire; and they were jointly authorized to agree upon such principles respecting the settlement of the boundary line as to them should seem just and reasonable. Under this authority Lieutenant-Governor Marcus Morton, at that time Acting Governor, in consequence of the death of Governor Eustis, named, on May 10, as Commissioners the Honorable Samuel Dana, of Groton; David Cummings, Esq., of Salem; Ivers Jewett, Esq., of Fitchburg; and they were met by the Honorable Samuel Bell, Henry B. Chase, Esq., and Samuel Dinsmore, Esq., who had been named as

Commissioners by the Governor of New Hampshire. Caleb Butler, Esq., of Groton, was appointed surveyor on the part of Massachusetts, and Eliphalet Hunt, Esq., on the part of New Hampshire; and each one was supplied with an assistant surveyor. Under the management of these gentlemen the line was again surveyed from the Atlantic Ocean to the Connecticut River, but, owing to disagreements between the two Boards of Commissioners, no final conclusions were reached. The report of the Massachusetts Commission was made to the Governor on January 31, 1827; and that of the other Commission was previously made to the Governor of New Hampshire; and they each recommended practically, though not in so many words, that the whole matter be indefinitely postponed, as no satisfactory result then was likely to be reached.

Nothing further was done by either state looking to the settlement of this vexed question until very recent times. On April 25, 1883, a resolve was passed by the General Court of Massachusetts, authorizing the Governor to appoint a Commission for the purpose of establishing the boundary line between the two states, which was to act in conjunction with a similar Commission to be appointed by the Governor of New Hampshire. The Commissioners were to reset and replace the monuments wherever necessary, in accordance with the report of the Commissioners of the Commonwealth made on February 28, 1827. (This is the date given in the printed Resolve of April 25, 1883, but it is probably a mistake for January 31, 1827.) Under this authority, the following Commissioners were appointed: DeWitt C. Farrington, Esq., of Lowell; Alpheus Roberts Brown, Esq., of Somerville; and Clemens Herschel, Esq., of Holyoke. The first two members of this board were duly qualified, but the third declined. From the want of co-operation on the part of New Hamp-



shire, no definite result was reached, and no report was made to the General Court, as provided for in the resolve. On June 19, 1885, another resolve was passed by the Legislature of Massachusetts, authorizing the Governor to appoint a Commission for the purpose of ascertaining and establishing the true jurisdictional boundary line between the two states, which was to act with a similar Commission to be appointed by the Governor of New Hampshire. This resolve repealed and superseded all previous legislation on the subject; and under its authority a new Commission was appointed, which, however, was soon afterward changed by two resignations. The Governor of New Hampshire also named another Commission to act with them. These two boards have presented several reports to their respective states, which show a thorough investigation of the whole subject; but unfortunately they do not agree in regard to the disputed line. It is understood, however, that they have reached definite and satisfactory conclusions respecting the boundary between the ocean and the Merrimack; but between this river and the Connecticut they do not concur.

At the present time it does not seem likely that the boundary line between the two states, as it runs from the Merrimack River to the Connecticut, will ever be substantially changed; but perhaps the day may come when it will be definitely marked by monuments on every road crossing the line, so that the dwellers along the border will know exactly where it lies. For generations the public sentiment of the neighborhood has placed the disputed territory within the limits of Massachusetts, and the occupants of the land have always claimed that state as their home. In their opinion they are citizens of this Commonwealth, and no judgment based upon the decree of a King, rendered more than a hundred and fifty years ago,

can dispossess them of their birthright. The customs and traditions, that have strained through a century and a half, in their case make a law on this point stronger than any human enactment.

*Ladies and Gentlemen:*—In this paper I have tried to give, so far as the limits of the occasion would allow, a short account of the relations of Pawtucket Falls to so much of the Northern Boundary of Massachusetts as lies between the Merrimack and Connecticut Rivers. For a long time I have felt that this connection was an interesting fact in the history of your city; and, if anything I have said this evening tends to keep alive or stimulate a similar feeling in others, I shall consider that my time has been well spent, and that my work is amply repaid.